

What is claimed is:

1. A method for screening video communications within an interactive television system, the method comprising:

5 intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
identifying the caller using information contained within the video communication request;

determining whether the caller is included within an unauthorized caller list;
and

10 rejecting the video communication request in response to the caller being included within the unauthorized caller list.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the unauthorized caller list is recipient-specific.

15 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
identifying the recipient using information contained within the video communication request; and

locating an unauthorized caller list specific to the recipient.

20 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the video communication request is intercepted by an interactive television system associated with the recipient.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the video communication request is
25 intercepted by an intermediate network node linking the caller and the recipient.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the intermediate network node is selected from the group consisting of a cable head-end, an internet server, and a satellite broadcast center.

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7. The method of claim 1, wherein identifying comprises:
extracting an identifier of the caller from the video communication request.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the identifier is selected from the group
10 consisting of a name of the caller, a network address of the caller, and a network
address of an interactive television system of the caller.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the unauthorized caller list comprises a
list of unauthorized identifiers, and wherein determining comprises:
15 determining whether the extracted identifier is an unauthorized identifier.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein rejecting comprises:
notifying the caller that the video communication request has been rejected.

20 11. A method for screening video communications in an interactive
television system, the method comprising:
intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
identifying the caller using information contained within the video
communication request;
25 determining whether the caller is identified within an authorized caller list; and

accepting the video communication request only if the caller is identified within the authorized caller list.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the authorized caller list is recipient-specific.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
identifying the recipient using information contained within the video communication request; and
locating an authorized caller list specific to the recipient.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the video communication request is intercepted by an interactive television system associated with the recipient.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein the video communication request is intercepted by an intermediate network node linking the caller and the recipient.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the intermediate network node is selected from the group consisting of a cable head-end, an internet server, and a satellite broadcast center.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein identifying comprises:
extracting an identifier of the caller from the video communication request.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the identifier is selected from the group consisting of a name of the caller, a network address of the caller, and a network address of an interactive television system of the caller.

5 19. The method of claim 17, wherein the authorized caller list comprises a list of authorized identifiers, and wherein determining comprises:
determining whether the extracted identifier is an authorized identifier.

10 20. The method of claim 11, wherein accepting comprises:
establishing two-way video communication between the caller and the recipient.

21. A method for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the method comprising:
15 intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
identifying the caller using information contained within the video communication request;
notifying a third party concerning the identity of the caller;
prompting the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video
20 communication request; and
accepting the video communication request in response to receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising:

identifying the recipient using information contained within the video
communication request; and

notifying the third party concerning the identity of the recipient.

5 23. The method of claim 21, further comprising:

 in response to not receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party
within an established time interval, rejecting the video communication request.

10 24. The method of claim 21, further comprising:

 in response to receiving an indication of rejection from the third party,
rejecting the video communication request.

15 25. The method of claim 21, wherein the video communication request is
intercepted by an interactive television system of the recipient.

20 26. The method of claim 21, wherein the recipient and third party are each
associated with an interactive television system at a different location.

25 27. The method of claim 21, wherein the video communication request
includes live video of the caller, and wherein notifying comprises:
 sending the live video of the caller to the third party.

 28. The method of claim 27, wherein the live video is captured by a video
camera integrated with an interactive television system of the caller.

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29. The method of claim 21, wherein notifying comprises:
establishing temporary two-way video communication between the third party
and the caller.

5 30. The method of claim 21, wherein accepting comprises:
establishing two-way video communication between the caller and the
recipient.

31. A method for screening video communications in an interactive
10 television system, the method comprising:
intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;
identifying the caller using information contained within the video
communication request;
determining that the caller is not identified within a unauthorized caller list;
15 notifying a third party concerning the identity of the caller;
prompting the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video
communication request; and
accepting the video communication request in response to receiving an
indication of acceptance from the third party.

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32. The method of claim 31, further comprising:
identifying the recipient using information contained within the video
communication request; and
notifying the third party concerning the identity of the recipient.

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33. The method of claim 31, further comprising:

in response to not receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party within an established time interval, rejecting the video communication request.

5 34. The method of claim 31, further comprising:

in response to receiving an indication of rejection from the third party, rejecting the video communication request.

35. The method of claim 34, further comprising:

10 adding an indication of the caller to an unauthorized caller list.

36. The method of claim 31, wherein the recipient and third party are each associated with an interactive television system at a different location.

15 37. The method of claim 31, wherein the video communication request

includes live video of the caller, and wherein notifying comprises:

sending the live video of the caller to the third party.

20 38. The method of claim 37, wherein the live video is captured by a video camera integrated with an interactive television system of the caller.

39. The method of claim 31, wherein notifying comprises:

establishing temporary two-way video communication between the third party and the caller.

40. The method of claim 31, wherein the unauthorized caller list is recipient-specific, the method further comprising:

identifying the recipient using information contained within the video communication request; and

5 locating an unauthorized caller list specific to the recipient.

41. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

an interception component configured to intercept a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

an identification component configured to identify the caller using information contained within the video communication request;

an authorization component configured to determine whether the caller is identified within the unauthorized caller list and reject the video communication request in response to the caller being identified within the unauthorized caller list.

42. The system of claim 41, wherein the unauthorized caller list is recipient-specific.

43. The system of claim 42, wherein the identification component is further configured to identify the recipient using information contained within the video communication request, and wherein the authorization component is further configured to locate an unauthorized caller list specific to the recipient.

44. The system of claim 41, wherein the interception component operates within an interactive television system of the recipient.

45. The system of claim 41, wherein the interception component operates within an intermediate network node linking the caller and the recipient.

46. The system of claim 45, wherein the intermediate network node is selected from the group consisting a cable head-end, an internet server, and a satellite broadcast center.

47. The system of claim 41, wherein the identification component is further configured to extract an identifier of the caller from the video communication request.

48. The system of claim 47, wherein the identifier is selected from the group consisting of a name of the caller, a network address of the caller, and a network address of an interactive television system of the caller.

49. The system of claim 47, wherein the unauthorized caller list comprises a list of unauthorized identifiers, and wherein the authorization component is further configured to determine whether the extracted identifier is an unauthorized identifier.

50. The system of claim 41, wherein the authorization component is further configured to notify the caller that the video communication request has been rejected.

51. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

an interception component configured to intercept a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

5 an identification component configured to identify the caller using information contained within the video communication request;

an authorization component configured to determine whether the caller is identified within an authorized caller list and accept the video communication request only if the caller is identified within the authorized caller list.

10 52. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

an interception component configured to intercept a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

15 an identification component configured to identify the caller using information contained within the video communication request;

a notification component configured to notify a third party concerning the identity of the caller and prompt the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video communication request; and

20 an authorization component configured to accept the video communication request in response to receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.

53. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

an interception component configured to intercept a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

an identification component configured to identify the caller using information contained within the video communication request;

5 an authorization component configured to determine that the caller is not identified within a unauthorized caller list;

a notification component configured to notify a third party concerning the identity of the caller and prompt the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video communication request; and

10 wherein the authorization component is further configured to accept the video communication request in response to receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.

54. A method for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the method comprising:

15 intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient from a group of potential recipients;

identifying the caller and the particular recipient using information contained within the video communication request;

20 locating an unauthorized caller list specific to the particular recipient;

determining whether the caller is identified within the recipient-specific unauthorized caller list; and

rejecting the video communication request in response to the caller being identified within the recipient-specific unauthorized caller list.

55. The method of claim 54, further comprising:
determining whether the caller is identified within a general unauthorized
caller list; and
rejecting the video communication request in response to the caller being
5 identified within the general unauthorized caller list.

56. A method for screening video communications in an interactive
television system, the method comprising:
intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a particular
10 recipient from a group of potential recipients;
identifying the caller using information contained within the video
communication request;
identifying the particular recipient using information contained within the video
communication request;
15 locating an authorized caller list specific to the particular recipient;
determining whether the caller is identified within the recipient-specific
authorized caller list;
determining whether the caller is identified within a general authorized caller
list; and
20 accepting the video communication request only if the caller is identified within
either the recipient-specific authorized caller list or the general authorized caller list.

57. A method for screening video communications in an interactive
television system, the method comprising:
25 intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

identifying the caller using information contained within the video
communication request;

determining whether the caller is identified within a unauthorized caller list;

rejecting the video communication request in response to the caller being

5 identified within the unauthorized caller list; and

sending a notification to a monitoring agency concerning the identity of the
caller.

58. The method of claim 57, wherein the monitoring agency comprises a
10 law-enforcement agency.

59. A system for screening video communications in an interactive
television system, the system comprising:

means for intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a
15 recipient;

means for identifying the caller using information contained within the video
communication request;

means for determining whether the caller is identified within the unauthorized
caller list; and

20 means for rejecting the video communication request in response to the caller
being identified within the unauthorized caller list.

60. A system for screening video communications in an interactive
television system, the system comprising:

means for intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

means for identifying the caller using information contained within the video communication request;

5 means for determining whether the caller is identified within an authorized caller list; and

means for accepting the video communication request only if the caller is identified within the authorized caller list.

10 61. A system for screening video communications in an interactive television system, the system comprising:

means for intercepting a video communication request sent by a caller to a recipient;

15 means for identifying the caller using information contained within the video communication request;

means for notifying a third party concerning the identity of the caller;

means for prompting the third party for acceptance or rejection of the video communication request; and

20 means for accepting the video communication request in response to receiving an indication of acceptance from the third party.